

Supervision to Aid Re-Entry (“STAR”) Program Summary

In 2007, the Board of U.S. District Court Judges in the Eastern District of Pennsylvania authorized a reentry program and court focusing on individuals in the City of Philadelphia with a significant risk of recidivism and history of violent crime. The program, known as Supervision to Aid Re-entry or the “STAR” program now has two reentry courts. U.S. Magistrate Judge Timothy R. Rice has presided over the first Reentry Court since its inception. Since then, a second Reentry Court was established and U.S. District Judge L. Felipe Restrepo presides over this court.

Every two weeks, up to 20 participants appear as a group before a federal judge to report on their progress. The participants are also intensively supervised by the U.S. Probation Officer assigned to reentry court. Participation is limited to individuals returning from custody to Philadelphia County with a significant risk of recidivism and/or history of violent crime (generally considered moderate to high risk offenders). The program is voluntary and most participants chosen need employment, training/assistance, or are likely to benefit from the program's resources in other ways. The Court and Federal Probation Office assist with education, training, employment, and other needs and the Court imposes graduated sanctions when necessary. After participants successfully complete 52 weeks, they are eligible for a reduction of their supervised release period up to one year.

Prior to court sessions, a Reentry Team, which is comprised of the Federal Judge, Assistant U.S. Attorney, Federal Defender, U.S. Probation Officer, Supervising U.S.

Probation Officer, and the Reentry Coordinator for the U.S. Attorney's Office, meets to discuss each participant's progress and collectively they devise a plan of action based on a consent model. The most unique aspect of the program is the group dynamic. All participants attend court as a group and are required individually to discuss their accomplishments and identify any obstacles they are encountering in the reentry process. This dialogue leads to the establishment of goals for the participant to achieve before the next court session.

The program has myriad objectives, including preventing recidivism, reducing the high rate of violent crime in the City of Philadelphia, and assisting high-risk ex-offenders with multiple social, family, and logistical issues confronting their return to society after years in federal prison. The success rates were validated in a May 2011 study by the Temple University Criminal Justice Department, which conducted an independent evaluation of the program's first 60 participants between September 2007 and July 2010. Compared to similar ex-offenders who did not participate in the program, reentry court participation reduced "the odds of supervision revocation by an impressive 82%." Although nearly 25% of the comparison group had supervision revoked, only 8% of the STAR participants were revoked.